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SUBJECT: KOSOVO WEEKLY UPDATE: BELGRADE PREPARES FOR NEW  
NEGOTIATIONS

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: Without hard news on Kosovo out of Kennebunkport, Serbian media filled the vacuum with speculation about new status negotiations. Serbian officials doggedly continued their diplomatic offensive abroad and political entrenchment at home. Partition of Kosovo crept back into the news vacuum but the GOS immediately denounced the concept publicly. Foreign Minister Jeremic traveled around Europe pressing Serbia's case on Kosovo. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Kostunica worked on lining up the political forces at home to ensure parliamentary approval for his Kosovo policy. END SUMMARY.

#### REACTIONS TO THE MAINE EVENT

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12. (U) Serbian officials downplayed earlier high expectations about Kennebunkport as it became clear that the only Kosovo-related news was that both leaders would delegate discussions on the issue to their top diplomats. Earlier, PM Kostunica called the meeting "an important opportunity" to open "a new page" on Kosovo status. Kostunica had expected the leaders to call for "new negotiations, with an aim of reaching a compromise and mutually acceptable solution that would be in accordance with basic principles of international law." Minister for Kosovo Samardzic expected Putin to request continuing the talks, saying that Serbia was "positive that President Putin will both stand on his principles and also be persuasive in his stance." After Kennebunkport, the mood was more subdued. Kostunica and Samardzic did not mention the Kennebunkport meeting after it occurred. Kostunica's party spokesperson backpedaled on July 2 calling the meeting only a "possible turning point," and "a small success and a step toward...justice."

13. (U) All Serbian media reported National Security Advisor Hadley's statement to the press that the President and Putin discussed Kosovo but that "it is a question that Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Russian Foreign Affairs Minister Sergei Lavrov will spend a lot of time on." RTS also reported the Department spokesperson's indication that there is no deadline for reaching a decision on Kosovo's status in the UNSC. Media reported the lack of any mention of Kosovo at the leaders' joint press conference.

#### PM WORKS KOSOVO AT HOME; FM & PRESIDENT AWAY

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14. (U) Kostunica shifted the nationalist rhetoric he used in the run-up to Kennebunkport and to language aimed at securing parliamentary support for his Kosovo policy. On July 3, the PM announced he would ask parliament to schedule a Kosovo debate in July, most likely July 23 according to media reports. (Note: The existing mandate stems from a February 14 session which reconfirmed the old team and platform. End note.) In a statement, Kostunica

said that "the state negotiating team will submit its report to the parliament, which then must adopt a new resolution on Kosovo and define further steps in our policy towards the issue." Kostunica also said his cabinet would insist on a new negotiating process with a new international mediator adding "it is of utmost importance that no preconditions or imposed limitations are set before a new round of talks."

15. (SBU) Illustrating the broad support Kostunica has attained for his Kosovo policy, both the government and almost all opposition parties agreed to schedule the extraordinary session to "adopt a new resolution set to define the state policy towards the issue of Kosovo." The government will begin consultations with party caucuses on Monday, July 9. DS caucus chief Nada Kulundzija previewed the new resolution, noting it was practically unchanged from the previously agreed upon version. Kulundzija expected the main points to be "preserving territorial integrity [and the] continuation of status talks without deadlines and predetermined outcome." Radical Party leader Vucic was eager to discuss the issue, saying "it is high time the Parliament discussed Kosovo. It seems that parliaments elsewhere around the world spend more time debating it than we do." Radical deputy leader Nikolic also voiced the need for a platform stating that regardless of the Russian and U.S. stances on Kosovo, Serbia needed to have its own plan for Kosovo "which does not depend on theirs."

16. (U) The only dissenting voice came from the Liberal Democrats, with their leader Jovanovic saying on July 3 that Serbia has "one last chance to define its state policy on Kosovo, abandon its defeatist political concept and face the truth." He added that his party was not surprised at the outcome of the Kennebunkport talks during which, he opined, Kosovo "was not mentioned even between bits of food."

17. (U) FM Jeremic traveled abroad predominantly to promote Serbia's Kosovo policy. Jeremic traveled the whole week, meeting

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counterparts in Slovakia, Slovenian, Austria and Germany. In a statement to Tanjug news agency prior to his departure for Bratislava on July 3, Jeremic said he intended to secure the support of "as many EU member states as possible" for new negotiations on the future status of the province, noting Serbia "already has Russia's backing." Jeremic told reporters that Serbia has "reached an important point in the process of Kosovo's future status settlement when there is no unified opinion on how to proceed."

18. (U) Serbian media covered a Reuters report, however, that "Western diplomats" see dividing Kosovo as possibly the only solution for the Kosovo status crisis. While in Berlin, Jeremic reacted to rumors that partition was being considered by some "Western diplomats," calling partition "unacceptable" and stating that both partition and a unilateral declaration of independence by Pristina are "very dangerous." Jeremic also met with Austrian FM Plassnik in Vienna on July 4 and said after the meeting that the international community and Contact Group had also made a decision not to accept the partition of the province. After his meeting with Slovenian FM Rupel, Jeremic said "the question of Kosovo is the biggest challenge within the frame of the Western Balkans' European prospects."

#### DIPLOMATIC ACTIVITY

19. (U) EU: Serbian media covered July 4 statements by Enlargement Commissioner Rehn, who said that Europe -- not the U.S. or Russia -- will pay the price if Kosovo status is not resolved. Rehn said that "neither Russia nor the U.S. is hit so directly by what is happening in the Balkans as we Europeans are. Europe will pay the price if the Kosovo status process falls through." He added that the EU "is focused on creating a democratic, multiethnic and economically sustainable Kosovo."

10. (U) EU: The media gave wide coverage to EU spokesperson Christina Gallach's comments to a Serbian daily that the EU "will

take responsibility and make a decision on Kosovo if Russia continues to say nothing but 'no.'" Gallach added that the EU would then ask for UNSC support and assessed that while Russia is defending its interests, "Kosovo is a European question...the future of the Balkans depends on Europe, not on Russia." She also noted that while the EU has been "patient" and trying to find a solution alongside Russia for months, "everything has a deadline and if there is no solution, at one point, we will have to make a decision."

¶11. (U) Russia: Gallach's interview immediately drew a reaction from Russian Ambassador to Serbia Alexeev, who called it "simply a statement coming from one person and it is wrong. This is not the kind of language that can be used in communication with Russia." Alexeev told journalists (as he was presented with 500,000 signatures collected by the Socialist Party of Serbia's "For Kosovo and Metohija's Defense" campaign) that Kosovo "is of vital importance to the Serbs and we are persistently working on it. I think it is also very important for the Balkans and all of Europe to preserve international law and international stability." Alexeev said that a unilateral declaration of independence by Kosovo Albanians would be "the worst possible development in the situation" but dismissed plans for Russian peacekeepers in Kosovo saying he was "not sure that this would be a good idea."

¶12. (U) China: Serbian media covered Chinese PermRep Wang Guangya's July 3 comments that Kosovo debate in the UNSC will happen once the USG and Russia have overcome differences and that "if the two sides can reach agreement China will certainly support it." News agency B92 spun this as indicating either "a summer break or fresh talks on Kosovo."

¶13. (U) Germany: According to outgoing German Ambassador Andreas Zobel in an interview to FoNET news agency on Sunday July 1, as far as Brussels is concerned, there is no connection between Kosovo and Serbia-EU negotiations on a Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA).

¶14. (U) Slovenia: In July 5 comments, Slovenian Foreign Minister Rupel said that Slovenia, which succeeds Portugal as EU president in 2008, plans to focus on the Western Balkans and "become the region's engine...to bring it closer to the EU." Serbian media also noted that Slovenian Foreign Minister Rupel said that his country has "no particular stance" on the Ahtisaari plan and that earlier support was "not Slovenia's own, but an EU stance."

¶15. (SBU) COMMENT: Belgrade would certainly have liked more out of Kennebunkport; a strong statement from Putin or a clear indication for more talks (and delay). However, with no indications that Russian interest is waning, Serbian officials see no reason to adjust their tactics abroad and at home. While it was positive that

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the GOS quickly rejected partition (even rumors of partition are dangerous things here), they did so because they now expect Kosovo to remain within Serbia. We can expect next week's consultations to be mostly theatrics with all the major parties sticking to Kostunica's script on Kosovo. The expected July 23 parliamentary session will be more of the same. END COMMENT.

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